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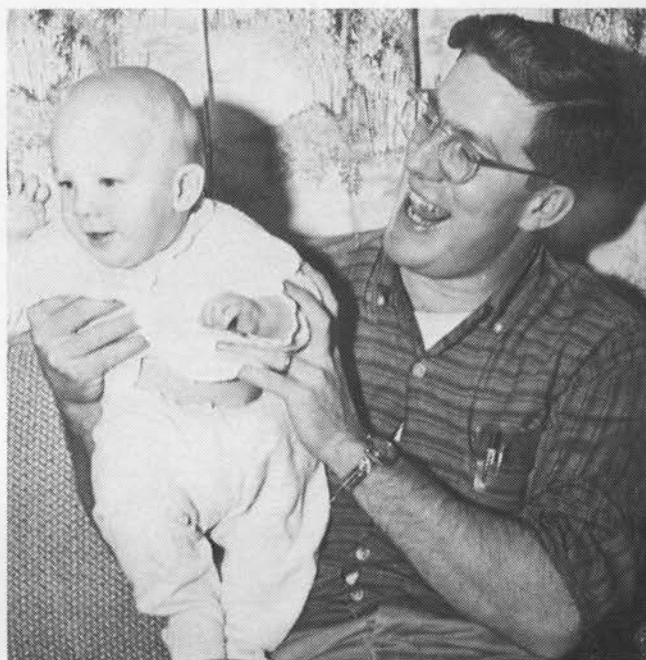
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I Was A Househusband For Nine Months

By Norm Engle

The author and Jeffery, age eight months, who inspired "Househusband." Expecting a baby means many things such as being a critic for the wife's new "tent" clothes and still finding time enough to carry out his regular study habits.



IMPENDING fatherhood is noted for bringing out the incapacabilities and frustrations in men. It's a choice topic for cartoonists. Personally, after having experienced the birth of my first child, I'm inclined to agree with what people say can happen to a man during the long wait.

His wife wants to eat weird combinations of food and expects him to know things even her doctor can't explain. It's my opinion that this is merely the way the little woman shares with us the tremendous job she has ahead. Left to herself she would probably go about her business calmly and serenely, efficiently bringing her little one into the world.

The books say the father-to-be should share in every way he can during the trials and tribulations of pregnancy. So from the day my wife came home and announced, "We're having a baby," I began in my confused, befuddled way to aid her. In the next nine months I experienced a first hand account of nature at work. Abruptly we found ourselves in an entirely different world.

My wife underwent mental and physical changes, becoming depressed, energetic, and moody all at the same time. Many strange notions came into her head.

Fortunately for me, my wife is a healthy individual so I can't sympathize with fellows who are plagued by morning sickness. Friends of mine who had already become fathers told me of contending with cracker

crumbs and corn flakes in bed. Not having these things, I considered myself lucky.

When it came to building "tents," and baby clothes, however, I was on the verge of hair-pulling. No matter where I was I'd be called for an opinion.

What did I know about sewing? Yet, I was required to consult on everything from size to ribbon selection. Because I have an infinite prowess around the kitchen, my wife also considered me an accomplished seamstress.

The next thing I knew, my wife was bringing home vitamins in a baby bottle. I never did discover who they were intended to help, the baby, Doris, or both. I must admit it was a very creative idea by someone as it helped solve the bottle buying problem.

A pregnant woman has an appealing wholesome look to me, but no matter how much I told Doris this, she had to be reassured that her bulging shape was not making her unattractive. The baby grew, and Doris got bigger until it was almost like having a "bull moose" in the house.

A change in size also brought other changes. At the least little assumption that there was movement, I had to come running so I could feel too. Before this ended, I was in shape for a berth on the Olympic track team.

I had made it quite clear with the doctor on our first visit that if he

didn't come through with a boy, he wouldn't get any more of our business. Our last trip to the clinic resulted in chaos. Doris came home saying the doctor told her to come to the hospital Thursday morning to have the baby. I wondered what kind of a quack he must be.

Calling the doctor to find out what was going on, I was told there was nothing to worry about. By some long medical term, he said Doris had a mild case of high blood pressure.

But Doris wasn't to be outguessed by any doctor. She had made up her mind not to wait till Thursday, and about three o'clock she woke me to say she was having pains. I rolled over, told her it wasn't Thursday and assured her she was having hallucinations. Minutes later I found myself driving her to the hospital, the doctor confirming that it was the right time. Luckily, neither of us had a hard time at the hospital. I was in the midst of taking finals at school and spent most of the time in the waiting room studying.

As it turned out, the doctor's first prophecy was correct. We're now the proud and happy parents of a son. It's lucky for the doctor that he came through on his promise too—for it looks as if we'll be doing business with him again soon.

I hope I can stand up as well for the rest as I did for the first. However, if hair pulling is any indication, I still have a lot to go through yet, and a lot of men never do get bald.